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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the background and development of a high school gifted and talented program. The GIFTS program balances acceleration and enrichment plus guided investigation. Identification sequences are listed, followed by a delineation of program components (organizational patterns, curriculum, instruction). Three curricular foci are noted: learning theories and giftedness, individual development, and approaches (including problem solving, interests and issues, and mentors). Rotation through the curriculum is accomplished in three years. (CL)

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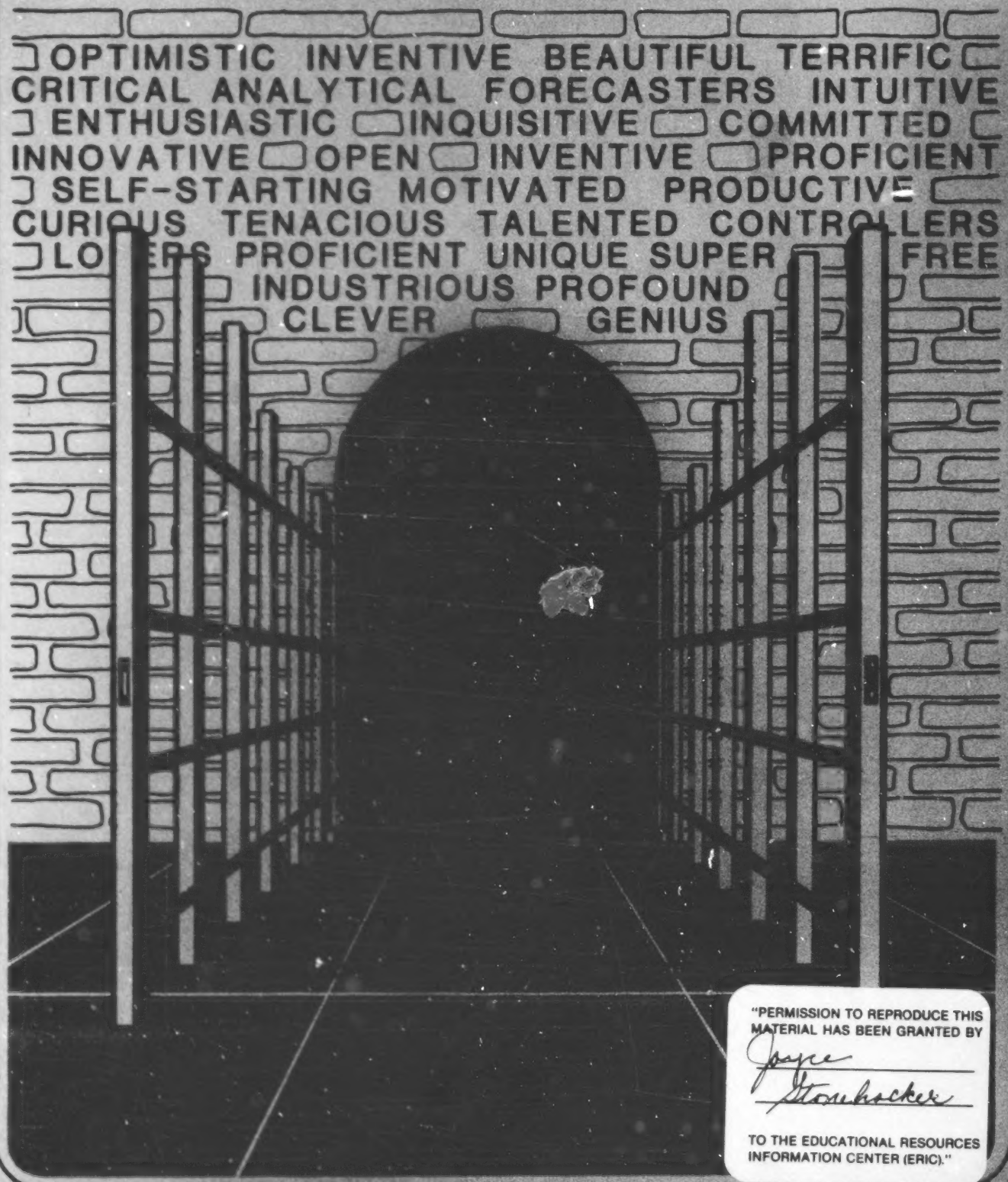
# GIFTS

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GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gifts For Senior High Schools

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GIFTS FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S HIGH SCHOOL GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

## I. PHILOSOPHY

Granite District's GIFTS manual states that "Two thousand years ago Aristotle said that a true democracy consists of treating unequal talents unequally. Our democratic government has asserted, through Public Law 94-142, that providing an equal education for all students consists of treating unequal talents unequally. This apparent paradox is resolved by the recognition that students with very different physical and mental abilities require different educational experiences. Just as we provide special ramps for students in wheelchairs, we provide special tracks for promising runners so that both are assisted in reaching their highest potentials. In Granite School District we recognize that the talents and needs of our students are not always the same. Regardless of their special handicaps or their special gifts, we have the responsibility to provide for their appropriate and therefore "unequal" educational experiences.

The educational aim of Granite District is to help all students to expand their potentials and to improve the qualities of their lives. Our programs are designed to assist students to succeed physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. We try to help them to use their time and resources wisely, experience success in their work, maintain intimate friendships, and live by the precepts of sound health.

All of our educational programs are based on the philosophy that learning takes place on an individual basis. Each student learns in an individual way; each student proceeds at an individual pace. Learning is more effective when related to students' individual interests, talents, and backgrounds. For these reasons, the educational materials and experiences provided in the GIFTS program are designed to meet the unique needs of students with unusual talents and abilities. Recognizing their special attributes and potentials, teachers in the program should help them develop their abilities to the highest possible level, generate knowledge rather than merely consume it, direct their creativity toward the solution of major societal problems, and elevate the cultural level of the world in which they live.

Because gifted and talented students are found within all ethnic and societal backgrounds and within all socio-economic levels, a thorough search is undertaken to discover each of them. This means that the identification of such students always relies on more than one measurement device or any other single reference.

Once careful identification and placement of students in the GIFTS program is completed, selection of the adults who will implement the programs is undertaken with extreme care. A team approach throughout each school is encouraged, with teachers of gifted students in "mainstream" programs, teachers working directly with students in

GIFTS programs, and administrators unitedly reinforcing the philosophy that what is best for students is best for the entire system.

This program provides gifted students both breadth (through a rich general education) and depth (through intensive study in areas of interest). This means that both the selection of content and methods of instruction are influenced substantially as different needs become evident. GIFTS programs are not based on acceleration alone, for every student is permitted to move through levels of subject matter as quickly as possible. It is this balance of acceleration and enrichment, plus guided investigation, that makes GIFTS unique from all other programs in our instructional system.

We endeavor to focus just as intently upon the humanistic considerations as we do the scholastic areas of the curriculum. Certainly it is necessary for a perceiving, behaving, becoming student to answer the questions "What am I?" and "What am I made of?" But it is also necessary for each one to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "What do I know of myself?" Each child is unique. Each child has the capacity to achieve amazing things. Because we care enough to provide such "unequal" programs in Granite District, we expect our gifted children to become the Shakespeares, the Michelangelos, and the Einsteins of the future--and, perhaps, to make the world a little bit more beautiful and secure than it has ever been before.

Therefore, the Gifted and Talented Program in Granite District high schools elicits original student products. These products result from classroom instruction, guided investigation, and mentorships. The students will, through enrichment activities, creativity enhancement, accelerated learning, and self-understanding skills, become more effective autonomous learners and creators. Encompassing a three year period, the program goals include understanding giftedness, project approaches and personal development.

## II. IDENTIFICATION

Identification is a problem basic to any gifted and talented program. In the Granite School District, the approach to identification has been broadly based using on-level testing, out-of-level testing, teacher, parent, and peer nominations. This method, prescribed in the GIFTS manual, has been fairly adequate for the purposes of basic identification. For further identification and refinement of the current procedure, an out-of-level test such as the NMSQT rather than the ACT should be used. The creativity factor should be explored, i.e., IBRIC's Biographical Inventory, Form U Creative Potential; projects, and other demonstrations.

The sequence of identification would become:

1. 9th grade participation in Gifted and Talented programs
2. 9th grade SAT scores
3. GATB scores
4. Permission from parents to use out of level and

creativity tests if the tests are necessary

a. NMSQT

b. IBRIC's

5. Simplified parent, teacher and peer nomination forms adapted from the GIFTS manual.

Other tests and procedures should not be overlooked if they prove as valid or moreso than this recommended procedure.

## III. PROGRAM

Again, the GIFTS manual defines the basic program as follows. Designed to meet the needs of the greatest number of students, it has evolved to its present state over a long period of time. As successful as it is for the majority of students, it needs considerable modification to meet the needs of highly gifted and talented students.

### 1. Program Descriptors

The difference between the GIFTS program and the regular program is most apparent in the former's program thrusts: acceleration, extensive experience, and guided investigation.

#### a. Acceleration

All students should progress through the basic Granite District curriculum content as rapidly as they can demonstrate that they have retained the information and can apply it in actual situations. Since gifted students can move through material so much more rapidly than can their classmates, the program must employ special organizational patterns that can facilitate their fluid progress.

#### b. Extensive Experience (enrichment)

Because gifted students have the capacity to investigate a far broader range of content areas than can be included in the enrichment program of regular students, they are provided a wider selection of topics to study. In addition, greater blocks of time are scheduled so that gifted students can study, apply their knowledge, exercise their skills, and experiment with unknowns.

#### c. Guided Investigations (product necessary)

Many students are capable of working for long periods of time on complex projects with a minimum of supervision. Guided investigation permits these students to develop independent projects where they can apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired at their own pace and rate. These projects are designed around students' special interests. They attempt to challenge students' abilities and permit them to utilize the more complex intellectual skills of analysis, synthesis,

evaluation, and creativity. Students working on such projects need only intermittent guidance from the staff. It is during these activities that mentors and resource people can be utilized to their best advantage with the students.

2. Organizational Patterns

The success of GIFTS programs is partly dependent upon the organizational changes that accommodate the unconventional requirements of acceleration, extensive experiences, and guided investigation basic to such a program.

a. Some accommodations can be made on a school-wide or even district-wide basis.
   - Multi-age classes
   - Advanced placement classes
   - Double-grade promotion
   - Credit by examination
   - Advanced tutoring
   - Extra classes for extra credit
   - Independent study
   - Flexible scheduling
   - Extended class periods
   - Block scheduling
   - Homogeneous classes
   - Resource rooms
   - Alternative schools.

b. Some activities are implemented in lieu of school-wide programs or to supplement them *within the classroom.*
   - Independent study
   - In-class tutoring
   - Correspondence with students of similar interests
   - Cluster grouping
   - Supplemental activities.

   (1) When activities may take place:
   - In lieu of regular class or group assignment
   - After completion of an assignment
   - As follow-up for an experience
   - During independent study
   - During selection time
   - When need-based tasks are appropriate.

   (2) How activities can be organized:
   - by meeting as groups for input, production, and evaluation
   - With the help of parent volunteer or parent aides
   - As a team-teaching endeavor
   - By permitting students to teach other students for the same or different classes
   - By block scheduling of classes.

c. Many programs accommodate activities that extend *beyond the school environment.* (For further information concerning the Community Education programs for gifted students, refer to GIFTS, Section IV.C, page 51)

Special interest groups before and after school
District seminars
Community mentors and resources
Advanced placement for part of the school day
Tutoring
Resource centers
Independent studies
Off-campus enrollment.

(1) When programs are offered:
Before and after school time
On Saturdays
When schedules can be altered radically.

(2) How activities can be organized:
With special classes or clubs meeting on a regular basis
With short-term mini courses and seminaries
By transporting students to other sites
By providing a special center or room
Through special events such as field trips or speakers
By off-campus experiences at another school or within the community
Through special programs during holidays and weekends.

3. Curriculum

Subjects of study and instructional materials for gifted students differ from content in the regular program because they must serve different abilities, interests, and needs. This does not imply that gifted students are required to do everything the other students do plus extra work; rather they work with alternative materials and subjects as soon as they demonstrate competence in the concepts taught within the regular program. In addition, content is partially determined by the students themselves.

Two topics stressed in curriculum for gifted students are oral and written communication and career awareness. If they are to become adult problem solvers, they must become fluent in their interpersonal and formal communications. Even at an early point in their education, students need to learn which careers call for their kinds of abilities as well as which abilities they must develop in order to prepare for careers that interest them.

Goals and objectives of each school program recognize the need for GIFTS students to master the basic course content as well as to follow individual pursuits. Special attention is given to the need for students to learn generalizations as well as facts and to employ problem solving, evaluation, and inquiry skills in their study of any subject matter.

4. Instruction

At first glance, the instructional strategies employed with gifted students may not appear to be conspicuously different from those used with other students. One of the major thrusts of the GIFTS

program, however, is self-directed investigation: therefore, students are taught early to work with a minimum of teacher direction. For those who need interaction with students of comparable ability, teachers provide opportunities for them to work together while following the model.

## IV. HIGH SCHOOLS GIFTED AND TALENTED MODEL

Starting from the center of the model, the "Gifted Student" will move according to the time line guide (see page 7) over a three year period, through the three curricular components: Learning Theories and Giftedness, Individual Development and Approaches. These three components will include cross-curriculum enrichment and evolve into guided investigations and projects.

### 1. Learning Theories and Giftedness

#### a. Group Dynamics

The program offers students understanding of when group rather than individual activities are appropriate, and of how groups operate; i.e., their place, their influence, their interpersonal relationships, and leadership.

#### b. Cognitive and Affective Development, Learning Styles and Creativity

The students will study left-brain and right-brain orientations; also learning styles, affective-cognitive, and creativity theories will be presented.

#### c. Responsibilities and Opportunities

Investigation into the necessity of intellectual honesty and into the responsibility associated with new knowledge and investigation will be considered. Such items could include, but not be restricted to, plagiarism, manipulation of data, and fabrication and openness of research.

### 2. Individual Development

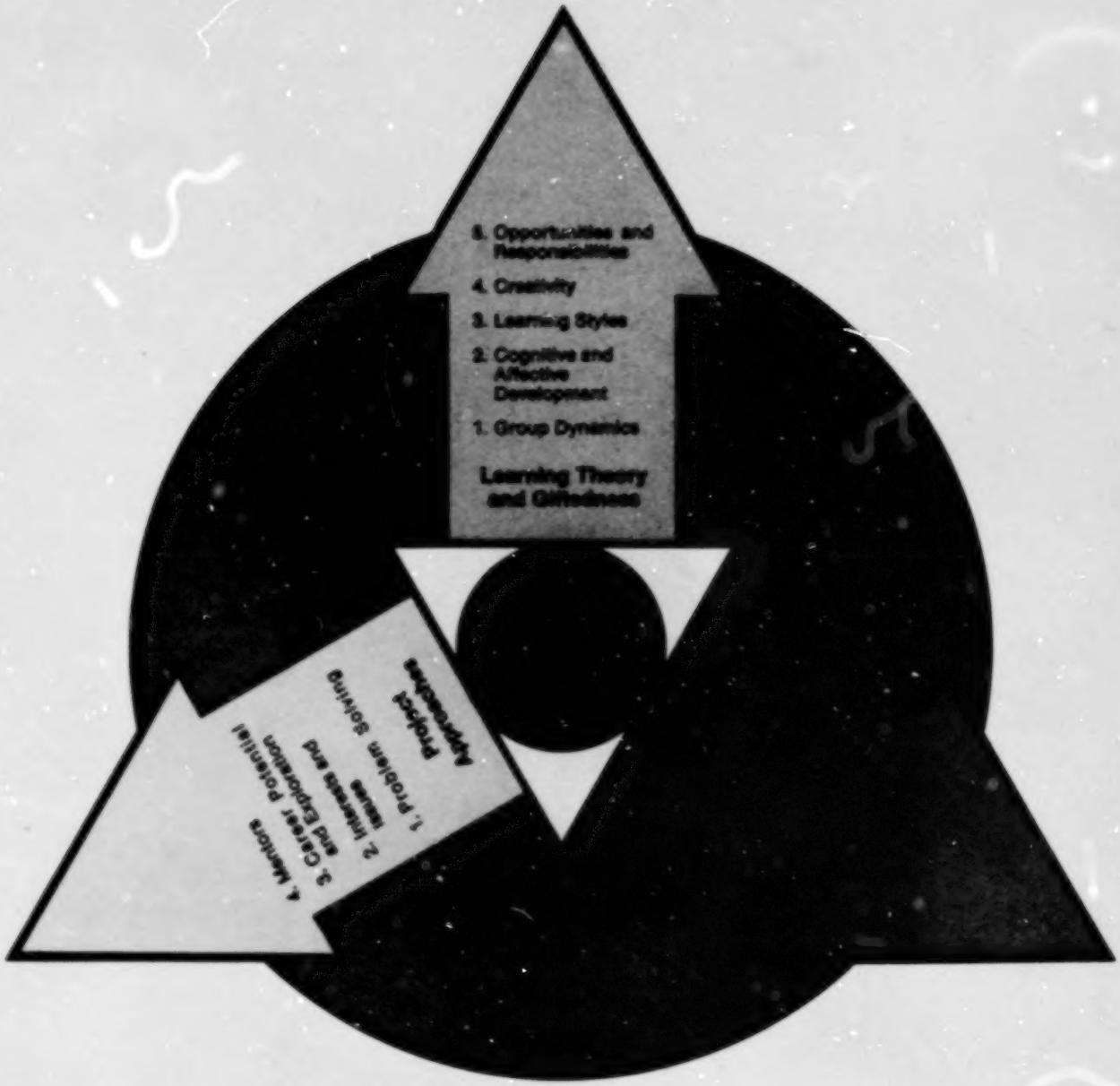
#### a. Self Awareness and Understanding

Gifted and talented students will be encouraged to develop intellectual, social, and emotional capacities to enhance their creativity and to appreciate the creativity of others. The program presents opportunities to learn awareness, understanding, and acceptance of self, to be more effective in reaching creative potential and in becoming productive members of society.

#### b. Communication

These students need communication skills to comprehend, convey, and accept more readily their own ideas and those of others. These tools build the framework for creativity and productivity which are necessary for the presentation and comprehension of new knowledge, which is the by-product of independent products.

# Gifts Secondary Model



c. Research and Learning Skills

The program encourages investigation of all possible sources for research, including community libraries, museums, industry, mentors, national and international sources. The program allows the students to investigate their own interests by collecting information, organizing and producing new combinations of that data. By so doing, the students have the opportunity to experience self-discipline through time management.

3. Approaches

a. Problem Solving

Effective creative problem solving skills are necessary for students to narrow topics of interest into concrete statements for research and study. In a non-judgmental climate where many ideas are accepted, the program encourages development of divergent and convergent thinking and the recording of ideas. It is recommended that students define and develop problem-solving models as a result of their explorations.

b. Interests and Issues

The Granite School District provides for each gifted and talented student an opportunity to develop skills, to investigate areas of interests, to examine issues and ultimately to pursue these in-depth investigations on an individual basis.

c. Career Potential and Exploration

Since it is assumed that gifted students have the potential to become future leaders, they need to develop effective problem solving, communication, and investigative skills as they explore possible careers. The program, therefore, offers these future leaders opportunities to become self-directed learners with the necessary skills, concepts and attitudes for life-time learning.

d. Mentors

As an integral part of the approach to projects, students engage the help and/or advice of consultants, or mentors, who have been identified by the teacher.

1. These professionals will act, with the teacher, as guides to the students in developing courses of study. The pairing of students with mentors promotes a close relationship between school and community.

2. The results of these mentorships, closely guided and evaluated by the teacher, become an integral part of the students' long range projects.

## IV. EXPLANATION OF THE ROTATION SYSTEM

The Gifted and Talented class will include a general orientation, at least one individual student project during the year, and a rotation of instruction in three basic areas: Learning Theories and Giftedness, Individual Development, and Project Approaches. This rotation will be on a three year cycle: hence one of the three areas will be taught each year to all students. Juniors and seniors will receive instruction in one of the areas during the first semester, then they will proceed to individual projects in the second semester. Sophomores will be identified by the end of the first semester, then during the second semester they will receive the instructions previously given to juniors and seniors who will be working on individual projects at that time. Project evaluation, an ongoing process, will occur periodically. (See the following - Exhibits A and B). Enrichment will be included in all areas of the model and in the rotation system since it is a vital aspect of the program.

Now in its early stages, this program increases in both numbers of students entering and remaining for a three year period and in the complexity of the coordination and depth of teaching involved in maintaining the class. Thus complete implementation of this model depends upon the addition of either an extra teacher or class period starting in the second semester of the second year or when necessary.

Exhibit A

THREE YEAR ROTATION

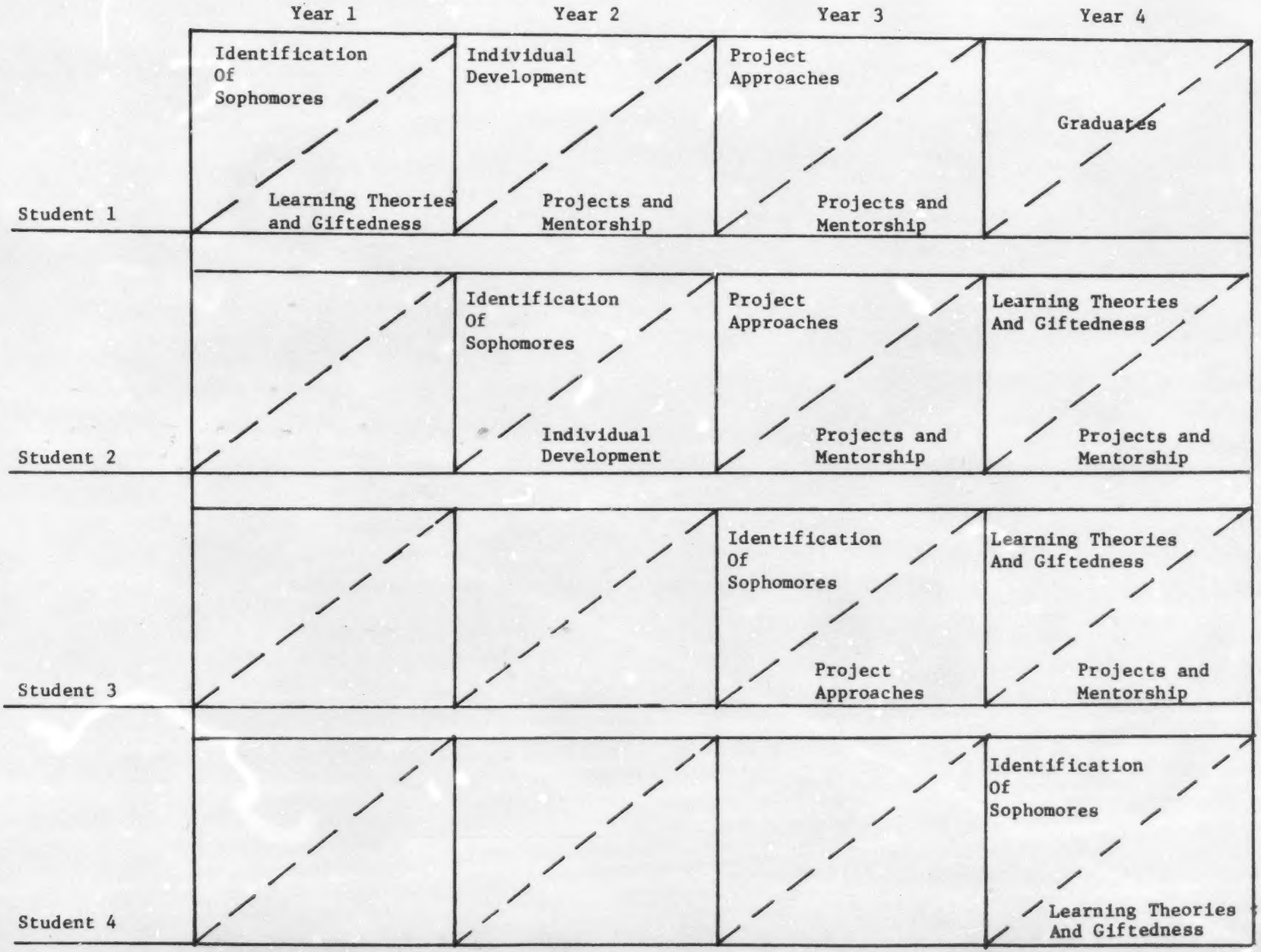
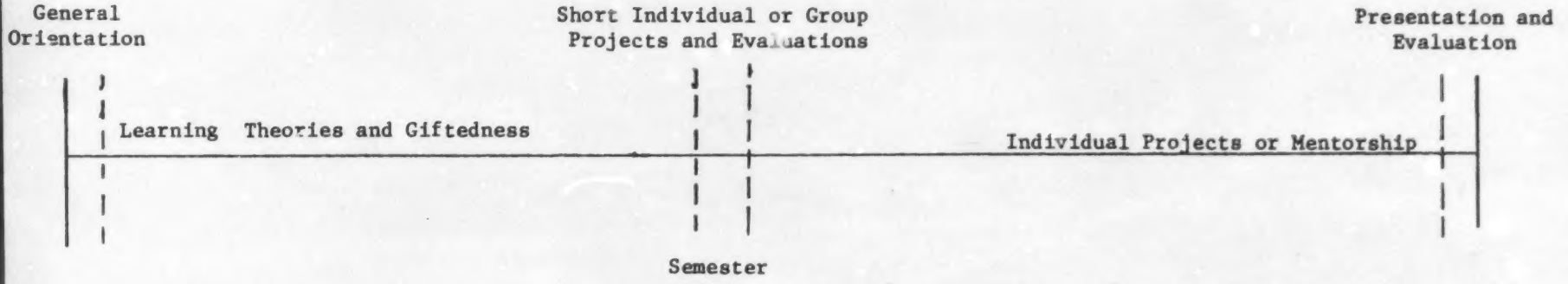


Exhibit B

FIRST YEAR - JUNIORS AND SENIORS




FIRST YEAR - SOPHOMORES

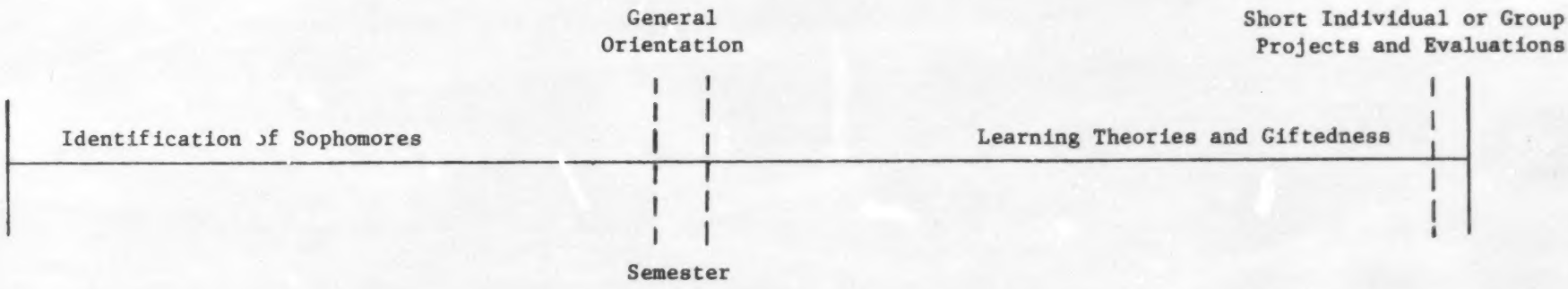
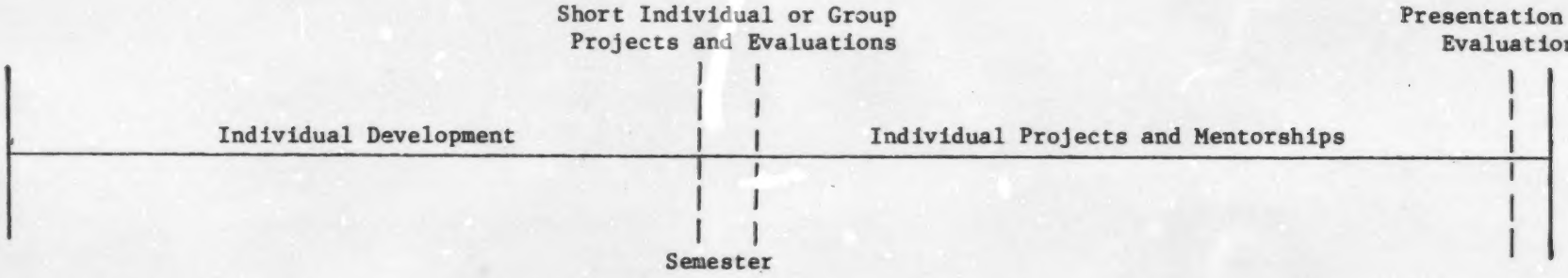


Exhibit B

SECOND YEAR - JUNIORS AND SENIORS




SECOND YEAR - SOPHOMORES

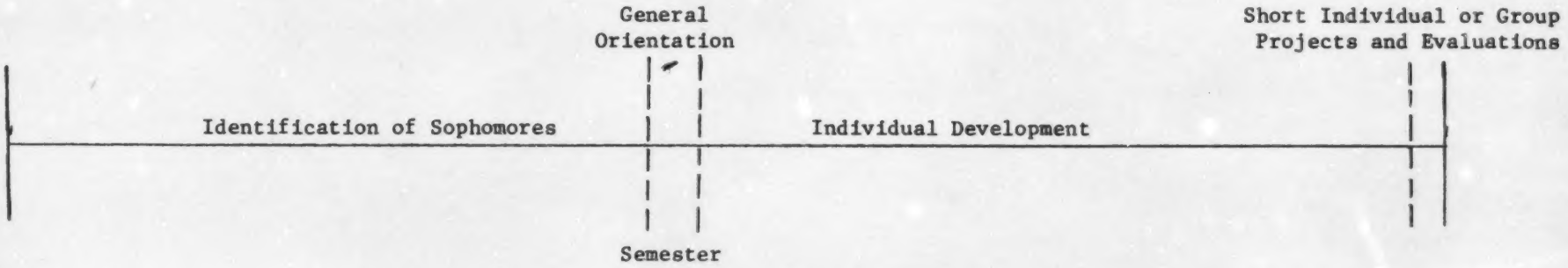



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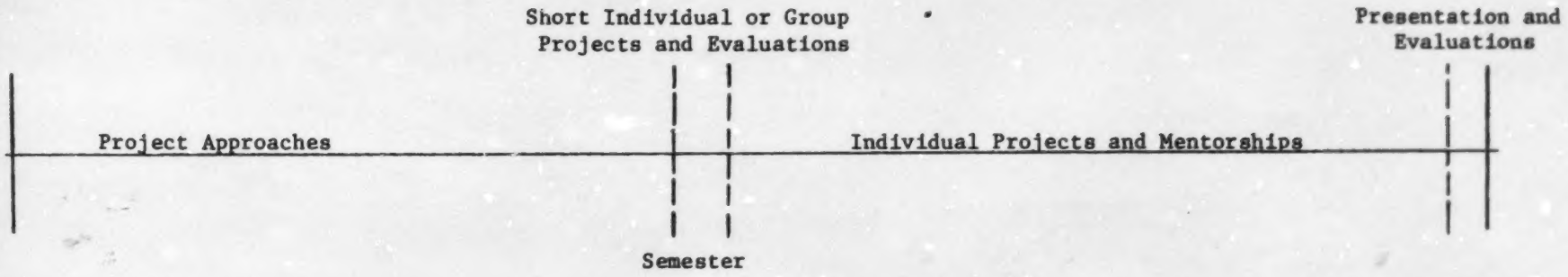
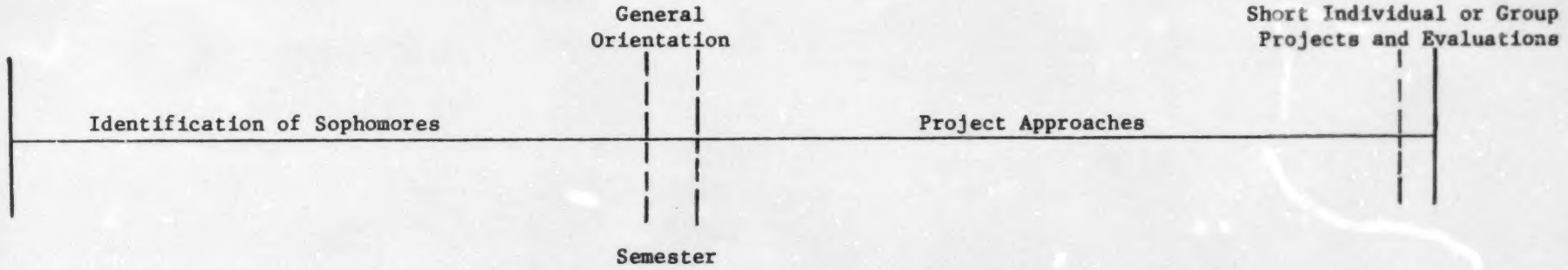
Exhibit B

THIRD YEAR - JUNIORS AND SENIORS




THIRD YEAR - SOPHOMORES

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V. General Orientation

New students entering the gifted program will receive an overview concerning the nature of giftedness, coping with being gifted, and using their particular gifts. To achieve cohesiveness and success, a yearly introduction (which does not necessarily contain the depth of the areas in the rotation cycle) will outline the nature, parameters, and philosophy of the course. This background will provide the needed foundation for students' input into the program. Such an orientation would include but not be limited to the following:

1. Personal Identity
   a. Who Am I?
   b. It's OK to be Gifted
   c. Challenges of being gifted
2. Study Skills
   a. Study Habits
      1. time management
      2. note taking
      3. reading skills
   b. Basic Research
      1. library skills
      2. community resources
   c. Testing

VI. Program Evaluation

In order to revise programs that meet the changing needs of students, progress and attitudes need to be monitored regularly. Observations by assigned staff members are recorded periodically; students (often with the help of parents) evaluate their own products and progress.

The purpose of program evaluation is to determine any changes that are needed. If the program is appropriate, students tend to do certain things consistently:

Stay on task
Initiate suggestions for their own curriculum
Complete self-initiated projects
Demonstrate understanding of the content studied
Share products with others
Choose to work in the program when given other alternatives
Continue working on projects outside of class.